

Sexually transmitted diseases

Extract from the *Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Department of Health and Social Security for the Year 1979*

In last year's report¹ reference was made to increases in the number of cases of genital herpetic infection, non-specific inflammatory disease, and candidosis, and there was a further increase of these diseases in both sexes in 1979. The total number of new cases of gonorrhoea decreased slightly from the previous year but there was a very slight rise in the new cases of early syphilis. The number of new patients attending the clinics continued to increase, mostly in urban areas and particularly in London.

A most disturbing feature of the year was the marked increase in the recognition of beta-lactamase producing strains of gonococci. These penicillin-resistant organisms are mostly imported into the United Kingdom by travellers from West Africa, especially Ghana and Nigeria, and from South-east Asia, particularly Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore. In 1978 only 31 such cases involving penicillin-resistant strains were detected whereas in 1979 the number had risen to 104. They present a real problem and could under appropriate circumstances spread rapidly in the community, leading to an epidemic such as has recently been reported in Holland. The economic and health consequences of such an outbreak could be very serious and a constant watch needs to be kept on the situation.

Research work is helping to establish the role of *Chlamydia trachomatis* as a cause of genital infections and particularly its importance in pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility. Much of this work is being carried out at centres in the United Kingdom.

Improvements continue to be made in the service for patients with sexually transmitted diseases. The work-load at the larger clinics is very heavy but the support services in microbiology, serology, and contact tracing are being developed steadily. In addition to accurate diagnosis and effective treatment, contact tracing forms a major part of the control programme and the contact-tracing service is expanding slowly throughout the country.

Syphilis, gonorrhoea, and chancroid (tables I and II)

SYPHILIS

Table I shows an increase in total cases for early syphilis of 2.9% (4.9% increase in men and 7.3% decrease in women), but primary and secondary syphilis showed a total decrease of 7.2% (4.7% in men and 22.7% in women). For late syphilis there was only a 2.3% increase overall.

TABLE I Cases of syphilis, gonorrhoea, and chancroid reported in England for the year ending 30 June 1979, with the revised figures for year ending 30 June 1978 in parentheses (for the incidence rate per 100 000 population see table II)

	Total		Men		Women	
Syphilis						
Early	2854	(2774)	2432	(2319)	422	(455)
Primary and secondary only	1630	(1757)	1439	(1510)	191	(247)
Late	1471	(1438)	1003	(988)	468	(450)
Congenital	120	(157)	39	(51)	81	(106)
Gonorrhoea						
All forms	55 366	(57 847)	34 924	(36 439)	20 442	(21 408)
Post-pubertal gonorrhoea						
All ages	55 323	(57 812)	34 912	(36 427)	20 411	(21 385)
Under 16 years	412	(550)	97	(142)	315	(408)
16-19 years	10 416	(11 207)	4265	(4510)	6151	(6697)
20-24 years	18 371	(19 204)	11 043	(11 673)	7328	(7531)
25-34 years	18 617	(19 156)	13 377	(13 806)	5240	(5350)
35-44 years	5667	(5854)	4568	(4753)	1099	(1101)
45 years and over	1840	(1841)	1562	(1543)	278	(298)
Chancroid	49	(48)	45	(44)	4	(4)

TABLE II *The venereal diseases—new cases per 100 000 population by age seen at hospital clinics in England 1975-79*

	1975			1976			1977			1978			1979		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Early syphilis															
All ages	8.44	1.48	4.87	8.86	1.50	5.08	9.67	1.71	5.59	10.27	1.91	5.98	10.77	1.77	6.16
Early syphilis															
Primary and secondary only	6.12	0.93	3.46	6.40	0.87	3.56	6.58	1.04	3.74	6.69	1.04	3.79	6.38	0.08	3.52
Under 16 years	0.05	0.02	0.04	0.07	0.09	0.08	*0.04	*0.04	0.04	0.20	0.10	0.15	0.05	0.04	0.05
16-19 years	6.54	3.76	5.18	7.52	3.30	5.46	5.72	4.56	5.15	6.8	4.52	5.69	4.99	2.90	3.97
20-24 years	18.02	4.60	11.42	19.35	3.46	11.58	17.76	5.02	11.56	19.10	4.76	12.10	16.83	3.44	10.29
25 years and over	7.26	0.65	3.77	7.40	0.68	3.85	8.01	0.66	4.13	7.77	0.66	4.02	7.79	0.60	3.99
Late syphilis															
All ages	3.68	1.73	2.68	3.87	1.76	2.79	3.67	1.70	2.66	4.38	1.89	3.10	4.44	1.97	3.17
Congenital syphilis															
All ages	0.32	0.46	0.39	0.28	0.33	0.30	0.25	0.37	0.31	0.23	0.45	0.34	0.17	0.34	0.26
Gonorrhoea (post pubertal)															
All ages	163.67	87.62	124.66	163.91	89.60	125.79	164.70	92.23	127.54	161.38	89.94	124.73	154.67	85.84	119.36
Under 16 years	1.89	8.26	4.99	1.87	8.57	5.13	1.98	8.52	5.16	2.56	7.76	5.09	1.75	5.99	3.82
16-19 years	340.26	513.59	424.85	331.52	513.05	420.19	329.41	510.53	417.73	304.17	473.06	386.66	287.65	434.41	359.37
20-24 years	753.58	472.99	615.66	728.41	475.72	604.92	736.92	490.17	616.71	696.65	471.19	586.58	659.05	458.49	561.14
25 years or over	146.11	41.03	90.42	147.97	42.73	92.40	145.38	43.36	91.52	144.92	43.52	91.39	140.63	42.67	88.92
Chancroid															
All ages	*0.03	0.10	0.27	*0.03	0.15	0.17	0.17	*0.01	0.09	0.19	0.02	0.10	0.20	0.02	0.11

*These rates were based on fewer than 10 events and consequently their reliability as a measure may be affected.

GONORRHOEA

Total cases of gonorrhoea showed a decrease of 4.3% (men, 4.2%, women, 4.5%).

CHANCROID

The number of female cases was unchanged and there was an increase of 1% in men.

Other sexually transmitted diseases (tables III and IV)**NON-SPECIFIC GENITAL INFECTION**

Cases of non-specific genital infection have increased by 2.8% (2.2% increase in men and 4.8% in women).

CANDIDOSIS

Cases of candidosis have increased slightly in both sexes, the overall increase being 1.9%.

GENITAL HERPES

This increased by 7.1% (4.7% in men; 11.4% in women).

Staffing

The number of hospital medical staff engaged in genitourinary medicine in England and Wales at 30 September 1979 totalled 217 (198.3 whole-time

equivalents (wte)) compared with 203 (185 wte) on 30 September 1978. The 1979 figures included 107 (101.6 wte) consultants, 33 (30.5 wte) senior registrars, and 41 (38.7 wte) registrars compared with 101 (95.1 wte) consultants, 36 (33.7 wte) senior registrars, and 35 (33.5 wte) registrars at 30 September 1978. At 30 September 1979, in addition to the above, there were 19 (4.9 wte) hospital practitioners and 144 (33.2 wte) part-time medical officers (clinical assistants).

Education and training

The main educational need is for contact-tracing training. Some of the staff of the clinics were able to travel abroad to visit specially selected centres as a result of funds made available for this purpose by the DHSS. Postgraduate students from overseas continue to visit Britain to attend postgraduate courses on sexually transmitted diseases organised by the British Postgraduate Medical Federation and the University of Liverpool.

Reference

1. Department of Health and Social Security. *On the State of the Public Health. Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer for the year 1978*. London: HMSO, 1980.

TABLE III *Other sexually transmitted diseases reported in year ending 30 June 1979 together with the revised figures for year ending 30 June 1978 in parentheses (for the incidence per 100 000 population see table IV)*

	Total		Men		Women	
Lymphogranuloma venereum	31	(27)	24	(26)	7	(1)
Granuloma inguinale	19	(14)	14	(11)	5	(3)
Non-specific genital infection (NSGI)	99 235	(96 569)	78 786	(77 055)	20 449	(19 514)
NSGI with arthritis	415	(500)	398	(465)	17	(35)
Trichomoniasis	19 346	(20 040)	1553	(1721)	17 793	(18 319)
Candidiasis	39 388	(38 646)	7994	(7826)	31 394	(30 820)
Scabies	2062	(2242)	1677	(1772)	385	(470)
Pediculosis pubis	7167	(6261)	4898	(4387)	2269	(1874)
Genital herpes	8601	(8029)	5346	(5108)	3255	(2921)
Genital warts	24 405	(23 412)	15 668	(15 149)	8737	(8263)
Genital molluscum	1013	(918)	681	(628)	332	(290)
Other treponemal diseases	1102	(1093)	747	(710)	355	(383)
Other conditions treated in a centre	48 107	(44 250)	29 236	(28 398)	18 871	(15 852)
Other conditions not treated in a centre	100 043	(97 281)	62 157	(61 086)	37 886	(36 195)
Other conditions referred elsewhere	2131	(1961)	1297	(1172)	834	(789)

TABLE IV *Other sexually transmitted diseases and other conditions—new cases per 100 000 population at all ages seen at hospital clinics in England 1975-79*

	1975			1976			1977			1978			1979		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Lymphogranuloma venereum	0.18	0.03*	0.10	0.14	0.01*	0.07	0.12	0.04*	0.08	0.12	0.00	0.06	0.11	0.03	0.07
Granuloma inguinale	0.02	0.03*	0.02	0.05	0.02*	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.03	0.05	0.01	0.03	0.06	0.02	0.04
Non-specific genital infection	306.90	65.87	183.25	310.35	73.60	188.91	329.01	84.84	203.79	341.37	82.07	208.35	349.04	86.00	214.10
Non-specific infection with arthritis	1.92	0.14	1.01	2.07	0.01	1.06	2.43	0.18	1.28	2.06	0.15	1.08	1.76	0.07	0.09
Trichomoniasis	6.42	74.96	41.38	6.81	76.23	42.42	7.55	76.93	43.13	7.62	77.04	43.24	6.88	74.83	41.74
Candidosis	23.71	116.83	71.45	27.68	125.84	78.02	30.09	126.26	79.40	34.67	129.62	83.38	35.42	132.03	84.98
Scabies	10.20	2.01	6.00	9.41	2.19	5.17	7.82	1.96	4.81	7.85	1.98	4.84	7.43	1.62	4.45
Pubic lice (pediculosis pubis)	16.07	5.82	10.80	16.07	6.58	11.21	18.12	7.39	12.62	19.44	7.88	13.51	21.70	9.54	15.46
Herpes simplex	16.77	7.86	12.20	19.10	9.83	14.35	20.80	11.10	15.82	22.63	12.28	17.32	23.68	13.69	18.56
Warts (condylomata acuminata)	56.58	27.98	41.91	60.31	30.71	45.13	64.82	32.54	48.26	67.11	34.75	50.51	69.41	36.75	52.65
Molluscum contagiosum	2.26	0.79	1.50	2.53	1.08	1.78	2.67	1.25	1.94	2.78	1.22	1.98	3.02	1.40	2.19
Other treponemal diseases	3.17	1.59	2.36	2.94	1.60	2.25	3.27	1.75	2.49	3.15	1.61	2.36	3.31	1.49	2.38
Other conditions requiring treatment in a centre	111.39	49.70	79.74	112.32	55.75	83.30	114.48	59.09	86.08	125.81	66.67	95.47	129.52	79.37	103.79
Other conditions not requiring treatment in a centre	232.69	132.61	181.35	237.48	136.00	185.43	252.54	146.72	198.27	270.62	152.23	209.89	275.37	159.34	215.85
Other conditions referred elsewhere				2.40†	1.33†	1.85†	5.06	3.13	4.07	5.19	3.32	4.23	5.75	3.51	4.60

* Rates based on fewer than 10 events and consequently their reliability as a measure may be affected.

† Figures collected from January 1976.